



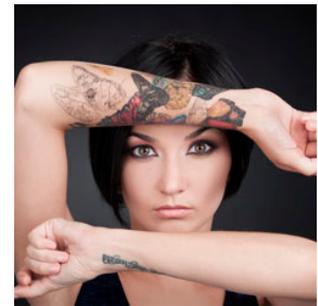
June 25, 2015 – Grand Rapids, MI

Tattoos and Skin Cancer Research

The research question of the week is do people with tattoos have an increased risk of skin cancer? Let me tell you what I found.

In a study published in *Lancet Oncology*, researchers examined the medical literature for case studies on tattoos and skin cancers of various types (1). They found 50 cases; 16 of them were melanoma. That doesn't seem to be an overwhelming number of skin cancer cases when you consider the 60 million or so people who have tattoos. The researchers concluded that at this point, the number of cases of skin cancer is more likely coincidental.

But I also found this case study. Physicians reported on a case of melanoma on a 79-year-old man that occurred in a tattoo he had for 60 years (2). Because of its location on the inner arm that most likely gets less direct sun exposure, they suggested that physicians examine tattoos carefully to see if lesions are blending with tattoos. It's difficult to notice a change in color in tattooed skin; skin cancers are usually pink, red, brown, or black, and those colors appear often in tattoos.



There were other case studies I found, but to be honest, at this point it doesn't seem tattoos are causing or hiding skin cancer with any frequency. Ready to head to the tattoo parlor to get that tattoo you've been thinking about? Hold off on that thought until after you read Saturday's message.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. *Dermatology*. 2013;226(2):138-47.
2. *Cutis*. 2013 Nov;92(5):227-30.

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